

October

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
NO WORSHIP 10:30 AM ev. every Sunday	NOVEMBER 1st ROCKY HORROR SHOW AT ESQUIRE WITH OSTRIS	1	2 RAP: Who's on Top-- Power in Rela- tionships.	3		4 PERRY'S ANNIVERSARY
6 NOC WORSHIP 7:00 P.M. 5:30 New Memb.	7	8	9 RAP: Peer Pressure - Handling your friends.	10	11	12
13 MCC WOR- SHIP-7pm 3:00 Shrimp Bowl at DAVID'S II MU VOLLEYBALL	14 COLUMBUS DAY OBSERVED	15	16 RAP Cross-Genera- tional Rela- tionships	17	18 UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS 2-DAY WORKSHOP "The Haunting Church"	19
20 MCC WOR- SHIP-7pm 5:30 New Memb	21	22	23 RAP HOLDING HANDS Making a poli- tical state- ment.	24	25	26
27 MCC WOR- SHIP-7pm MU VOLLEYBALL 5:30 New Memb MOTHER-IN-LAW DAY	28	29	30 RAP HOMOPHOBIA -- THEIRS AND OURS	31 HOOKER'S BALL ALL THE BARS HALLOWEEN	SPRING S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	FALL S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

CLASSIFIED ADS

Weekend Sketch Group -- interested? Call the HELPLINE for information.

WRITERS GROUP -- Meet once a month for social contact and constructive criticism of members' work. Bring a piece of writing for criticism, and keep a log of the number of hours spent writing. Contact Shirley L. at the HELPLINE.

BIKERS (no, silly, not that kind!) are being sought for a bike riding group. Ride, bring lunch and picnic-- weather will be perfect soon.



HALLOWEEN

FOR SALE: SCM Electric Typewriter, ribbon spool. Best offer. Evenings 8-10. 342-7891, ask for John.

PLUMBING - Indoors, reasonable rates. Expert service. Call evenings after 6, or Mondays, 476-5171, as for Harry.

CLEANING-INTERIOR PAINTING, WALLPAPER. Organize your precious collectibles?? Excellent references in both communities. 476-9142, ask for Shirley.

BOWLING LEAGUE -- Members of MCC want to form a bowling team to hopefully compete against other gay groups (bars, etc.). At least six teams are needed. Call the HELPLINE if you are interested.



The Metropolitan Community Church

4500 BITT AND SPUR ROAD

AT MOBILE

MOBILE, ALABAMA 36608

Rev. MARGE RAGONA

Pastor

(205) 476-9142

Volume 1, No. 2

October 1985

STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART...

The veil of distaste and misconceptions surrounding the gay segment of the population is nowhere better illustrated than in the film, "God, Gays and the Gospel," a no-nonsense look at the rapid rise of the Metropolitan Community Church.

One of the most poignant plights of gay people in today's world is the denial of their right to worship by most of the traditional organized religions. Almost without exception the Christian faith has taken upon itself the right to refuse gays a part in the Family of God.

The long struggle by MCC founder Rev. Troy Perry to establish a faith, not just for gays but for anyone, is the focus of the film. In concise, to the point terms, the production addresses the sheer magnitude of the work being done and the forward strides being made by Perry and his legion of pastors and congregations.

Since its founding in 1969, MCC has endured everything from ridicule to bombings to burned-out church sanctuaries. More than 17 years later, Perry and his followers have forged a recognized, respected faith wherein all are welcomed. It is a tribute to the ecumenical and accepting nature of this church that 20 per cent of its members are non-gay. It is a true illustration of the overused, misused term, "real Christian people."

Perry, a transplanted Floridian, excluded from the church of his childhood, spent years berating himself as "unacceptable." In the end, he determined that there is no reason -- save for human bigotry and Biblical misinterpretation -- for gays to be denied a right to their faith. Nowhere in the Bible, he points out, is there condemnation of homosexuality as it is understood today. In one of his most moving sermons, he presents a stunning point: "If AIDS is God's 'gift' to the homosexual, then is toxic shock syndrome God's 'gift' to women for being female? ... or is Legionnaires' Disease God's 'gift' to the American Legion for being too patriotic?"

From the perspective of a "straight," the message of "God, Gays, and the Gospel" is very much to the point: No human deserves the right to tell another he or she will never be acceptable in the eyes of God. Moreover, it should be remembered that Perry et al are not working for immediate and total social acceptance, but for establishment of a climate of cooperation and understanding.

No "straight" who professes a concern for human rights should let gays bear this struggle alone.

(Note: N.J.Green is MCC at Mobile's "token straight," our assistant organist. Thank God for our "straight" friends.)

MCC MEMBERS-ATTENTION!

Congregational Meeting, October 27, following worship service. Election of officers, other important business, including coming into agreement with GSS changes.

REMINDER

SOCIETY

MISS BETTY - OWNER
51 S. CONCEPTION ST.
433-9141

SUN. - THURS. 10 A. M. - 2 A. M.
FRI. - SAT. OPEN 24 HOURS

ESQUIRE BAR & LOUNGE

Phone 433-9175 -
Mon.-Fri. 9:30 a.m. Till
Sat. 9:30 a.m.-2a.m.
13 South Joachim St. Mobile, Ala.

FROM THE EDITOR--

Our first issue was a roaring success, so the community tells us. We personally wish to thank the bar owners and managers for making the newsletter a reality, rather than the "dream" so many of us have talked about for the last couple of years. At last we have a way to communicate ideas among gays in Mobile. We also want to apologize to Chuck at Troopers for omitting a news item last month. Thanks for bearing with us and our mistakes -- we'll get it right with practice. A word of thanks to all of you out there from the small group at MCC. Because of you the newsletter will continue to grow, to increase our awareness and to solidify the community.

To date we have received the names "Revelations," "Mobile Pride News," and "Genesis." Don't be bashful. Send or call in your suggestion.

We stated our purpose last month, "to offer a news source for the entire community." We are happy to report that this issue, our second, has accomplished that goal. Sincere applause to each organization and business for your participation. We are open to your suggestions and your criticism. Our new feature, "Community Profile" has already been designated for the November issue. Send in the name of someone you wish to acknowledge in a future issue.

Our editorial policy requires that a name and address be submitted along with news copy. Your name and address will not be printed without your written consent, but we must have this information to protect the legal position of the church. Please drop editorial copy or editorial replies at the church or mail them to: MCC Newsletter, P.O. Box 8524, Mobile, Ala. 36608. The deadline for all copy is the Third Monday of the Month.

**NATIONAL
ORGANIZATION
FOR WOMEN**

NEWS FROM THE LESBIAN TASK FORCE OF NOW

Two important pieces of legislation are going to be brought to Congress in this year, NOW has informed us. One, is H.R. 230, the Federal Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights Legislation which is spearheaded by Representative Ted Weiss of Brooklyn, N.Y. and carries the endorsement of 44 other representatives, including Rep. Gerry Studds of Massachusetts, an openly gay legislator. The bill primarily calls for the insertion of the words, "affexional or sexual orientation," throughout the Civil Rights Act of 1964, following the word "color," and in other legislation, like the Equal opportunity Act, where it is inserted after "sex," thus identifying gay and Lesbian discrimination as equal to that against people of color and as pervasive as sexism. Interestingly, the same act speaks against acts of intimidation or violence against gays and Lesbians in the same passage that it speaks about violence against religious groups.

The other piece of legislation is the now infamous McCarran-Walter act, which prohibits certain people from entering the United States because of political or sexual orientation. Farley Mowat, the Canadian author of such dangerous books as the environmental study, "Never Cry Wolf," and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Colombia's Nobel Prize Winning novelist, were both excluded -- and refused to be singled out as special cases -- under this Act. Gay men and women can be refused entry into the U.S. -- and have been -- by the terms of the McCarran Act. It is important for the McCarran Act to not include gays and Lesbians under the heading of those accused of "moral turpitude."

The legislation above is entitled Immigration Exclusion and Deportation Amendments of 1985. The first is HR 230. Your congressional representative will vote on both of these. Make your wishes known. One letter -- one letter -- can make the difference, because very few letters on any subject are received from constituents, and as many as five or six letters can seem like an avalanche. If you are interested in how to write to Congress, call the HELPLINE for a copy of MCC's booklet, Writing to Congress, from MCC's Department of Christian Social Action.

Bulletin Board

ORDER OF OSIRIS - "The Rocky Horror Show" Friday and Saturday, November 1 and 2, Presented by the Order of Osiris and the Esquire House -- at the Esquire House. \$5.00 admission. See an Osiris member or your bartender for tickets.

Less than 140 days to Osiris' 5th Anniversary Mardi Gras Ball, February 7, 1986.

UNITARIAN-UNIVERSALISTS - Study series for 4 weeks on Men's Life and Men's Issues. Call the UU's at 342-6834 for information and starting date (near the end of the month.)

2-day Workshop -- The Haunting Church October 18 and 19 at the UU Fellowship 6345 Old Shell Road.

Volleyball -- every 2nd and 4th Sunday, at 2 P.M. at the UU's, weather permitting.



TROOPERS - Shuffleboard tournaments every Wednesday at 8:30 p.m. Pool tournaments every Thursday at 8:30. Some of the best popcorn in Mobile.

CORRAL - Pool tournament every Monday at 9:00 p.m. Please watch for announcements of upcoming Halloween events.

CPA - Costume contest at midnight in conjunction with Hooker's Ball.

Free buffet every Sunday at 9:30 p.m. Watch for "Name that Tune" to begin early November on Sunday evenings.

DAVID'S II - Special Guest, Halloween Eve through Saturday, Carmen Del Rio.

First Sunday of October begins David's free buffet from 3-9 p.m., and the Tea Dance.

Shrimp boil, Sunday October 13th, from 3 til? To help raise funds for MCC's HELPLINE and newsletter. \$3.00 cover, includes all the boiled shrimp you can eat, along with other goodies.

ESQUIRE - Rocky Horror Show November 1 and 2 at 9:30 p.m. Get your tickets from Esquire or any Osiris member. \$5.00 per ticket.

PROFILE

Did you enjoy Mobile's Gay Pride 85? Our first profile is, Harry, organizer and leader of Pride 85. Harry was the catalyst that brought together the various elements of the community. It wasn't his first time out, certainly not his first effort for our benefit. Fifteen years in the Mobile area has seen Harry speaking at the University of South Alabama and Springhill College on Gay/Lesbian issues. He was one of the strong leaders of the old Gulf Alliance for Equality as well.

When Harry isn't working on our behalf, he enjoys meeting the public in his retail profession. While there's still daylight after a hard day at work, you might see him out bicycling or running, or on Sundays offering his talents at the Unitarian-Universalists' worship and fellowship. "My religion," Harry said, has given me a lot more direction in my life, and a greater sense of freedom to allow my own beliefs to evolve."

Harry offered the following thoughts about and reflections on Gay Pride '85: '85 was very successful considering the late starting date for planning. '84, our first Gay Pride Activity, made '85 much easier to put together. Adding more organizations -- the UU's and MCC -- added much to '85's success. Without Danni B. '85 would not have come together. A SPECIAL THANKS TO HER.

For 1986 Gay Pride, Harry foresees greatness. "For once, we are starting off with some money, \$186.00, thanks to the bars. We will begin planning at a much earlier date, offering the same type of activities, with more variety, however. We will certainly push for more publicity and participation from all the organizations. We want Gay Pride to be financially self-supporting, and there's no reason it shouldn't be if we all work at it."

When asked what he would change if given the right opportunity, Harry offered the following: "I'd like to see more open Gay/Lesbian businesses, organizations, and individuals come out, and a greater media presence for the community. However, the fear of coming out is still our greatest obstacle. Most of us, including me, still face job discrimination, neighborhood harassment, and the possible loss of our families or their strong disapproval."

In a larger context, Harry went on, "Much of our recent publicity has been derogatory. I feel that the Moral Majority uses us as their biggest fundraiser, particularly now that AIDS has come to the forefront of the news media."

Harry is one of the strongest and most open figures in our Mobile Gay Community, and with his support and leadership, gay Mobile should reach the goals which he is helping us set.

SOCIETY LOUNGE -- Beginning in October, the first weekend each month, Miss Betty will be presenting weekend shows at 10 and 12 midnight. No cover.

TROOPERS

215 Conti Street

438-9139



HOURS: 11 a.m. - 3 a.m.

CORRAL

54 So. Conception

433-9258

Weekdays - Noon Till
Weekends - 24 hours

SOMETHING TO SELL, SERVICE TO OFFER??
Call 476-9142 for rates and deadlines.
Please NO PERSONALS, except Birthday, Anniversary, Thank You's.

Distribution

(Metropolitan Community Churches share at table with all who believe in God, accept Jesus as their savior and seek to live by the power of the Holy Spirit. We also believe in praying for each other. You may come forward to share in the sacrament and receive prayer individually, with a friend, your partner or in small groups.)

Prayer of Thanksgiving

*PARTING HYMN

"We are the Church Alive"

*BENEDICTION



Thank-you for joining with us in this Tenth Anniversary Celebration. If you would like more information about our ministry, worship and dreams for the future, there is an information table near the door to the ballroom where you can browse. If you would like to be added to our monthly newsletter mail list, there is also a sign up sheet at the same location.

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF MOBILE



P. O. Box 6311
Mobile, Al. 36660
ph. 334-476-4621



ORDER of Worship
SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 1995
MCC of Mobile

Tenth Anniversary Celebration
"Coming Out, Coming Home"

Shirley
Madison
Biloxi
Gardner
Pascarella
37

*Singspiration

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

— Greetings from Lee, other churches, personal

*Call to Worship:

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth!
Serve the LORD with gladness; come before God with joyful singing.
Know that the LORD is God who has made us, and not we ourselves.
We are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture.
Enter the LORD's gates with thanksgiving and God's courts with praise:
For the LORD is good, whose lovingkindness is everlasting
and faithfulness is to all generations.

INVOCATION

*HYMN of PRAISE

"Joyful people, come and worship"

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE

*PRAYER HYMN "

READING of the SCRIPTURE:

Acts 8:26-39

Matthew 19:8-15

Doxology: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow"

THE WORD in SONG

MCC of Mobile Choir

THE Spoken WORD

Rev. Elder Troy Perry

*HYMN

"Children of the Rainbow Promise"

OFFERING and DOXOLOGY

"We give thee but thine own"

Holy COMMUNION

Community Prayer of Confession:

O Lord Most High, we confess that we have not valued ourselves nor our calling for which you have created us. We have not remembered your love and good news in Jesus Christ. We repent and ask your forgiveness and healing touch to make us whole again. Fill us with your Spirit that we may have faith to follow your ways and the courage and strength to stand firm in the face of opposition. May your name be glorified in all that we are, do and say in the name of Christ. AMEN.

"Agnus Dei"

Assurance of Pardon

Great Thanksgiving:

God is with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give God thanks and praise.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Yes, God our creator, who delights in each one of your creations, we give you thanks for life, love and grace. We praise you for salvation and redemption in Jesus Christ and restoration to the fold of your flock, the church. We rejoice in the blessing of your Spirit who dwells within us now, empowering us to live as your holy people. It is right to give you, O God, thanks and praise. We join the heavenly host proclaiming great are you, Lord, and greatly to be praised. Therefore we lift up our voices with all of your creation, joyfully saying this unending hymn of praise: "Holy, holy, holy"

Words of Institution of the Sacrament

— M-bread, H-cup

Prayer of Consecration

— M

Mystery of Our Faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen.

Christ will come again. Alleluia!

Invitation to the Table

Joyful people, come and worship

8.7.8.7.D.

HYMN TO JOY

1. Joy - ful peo - ple, come and wor - ship! Lift your hap - py hearts in song
2. And to - day we lift our voi - ces; Of a - ma - zing love we sing,
3. God, whose mer - cies know no boun - d'ries Heard our cries for li - ber - ty;

Giv - ing praise for our church fam - ily In God's house, where all be - long
Giv - ing thanks and praise to Yah - weh For the joy that love can bring!
Broke the chains of fear that bound us, Lift - ed, loved, and set us free!

Cel - e - brat - ing our u - nique - ness Filled with love and pride to - day,
Prais - ing Je - sus and the Spi - rit, Sing - ing of a - ma - zing grace,
Learn - ing how to love each o - ther, How to live and how to grow,

Forth we tra - vel on faith's jour - ney, We, who once had turned a - way.
Here we see that same sweet Spi - rit On each sis - ter's, broth - er's face.
Chil - dren of God's new cre - a - tion, On - ward, up - ward now we go! A - men.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
praise God, all creatures here below; praise God above,
ye heavenly host: Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost.

We give thee but thine own

We give thee but thine own, whate'r the gift may be;
all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O God, from thee.

Agnus Dei

Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us, we pray;
Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us, we pray;
Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.
Grant us evermore thy peace.

Holy, holy, holy

Holy, holy, holy, One God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:
Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty,
God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

LESBIAN &
GAY FREEDOM

We are the Church Alive

CHURCH ALIVE

6.6.8.6.8.6.8.6.

Moderato

1. We are the Church A-live, Christ's pres-ence on this earth; We
 2. We are the Church A-live, Our faith has set us free; No
 3. We are the Church A-live, The bo-dy must be healed; Where
 4. We are the Church A-live, All praise to God on high. Cre-

give God's Spi-rit bo-dy in the act of our new birth. As
 more en-slaved by guilt and shame, we live our li-ber-ty! We
 strife has bruised and bat-tered us, God's whole-ness is re-vealed. Our
 a-tor, Sav-ior, Com-fort-er! We laud and mag-ni-fy Your

yield-ed o-pen chan-nels for God's de-scend-ing dove, We
 fol-low Christ's ex-am-ple and free-dom now pro-claim, De-
 mis-sion is an ur-gent one; In strength and health let's stand, So
 name, Al-might-y God of love; Pray, give us life that we May

shout and sing, with joy we bring God's all in-clu-sive love.
 stroy-ing myths of doubt and fear in Je-sus' might-y name.
 that our wit-ness to God's light will shine a-cross the land.
 be your Church, the Church A-live, For all e-ter-ni-ty.

TEXT: Jack Hoggatt-St. John and David Pelletier, 1980

MUSIC: Jack Hoggatt-St. John, 1980

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The Hymnal Project, © 1989 MCC San Francisco

Children of the Rainbow Promise

L.M.

TRYGGARE KAN INGEN VARA

1. Chil-dren of the Rain-bow Pro-mise, With God's
 2. God's for-giv-ing love un-chains us; in com-
 3. Bread of Hea-ven, Cup of Bless-ing; Life's new
 4. Let our pro-mise now be giv-en to be

bless-ing sure up-on us By the Spi-rit's liv-ing
 mu-ni-ty sus-tains us Like a sis-ter, like a
 co-ve-nant con-fess-ing Lov-ing Pa-rent, Kind and
 salt and to be leav-en, To be ag-agents of God's

wa-ters, Born a-gain: God's sons and daugh-ters.
 bro-ther, we are part of one a-no-ther.
 ten-der, to your mer-cies we sur-ren-der.
 car-ing through our grow-ing and our shar-ing.

- 5 O Immortal God of Glory,
 When we tell the world your story,
 May they see we're not in factions;
 May they know you by our actions.
- 6 By this covenant we're saying
 We're your Church, and here we're staying
 Not a building with a steeple,
 But God's loving, caring people!

TEXT: Barry Wichmann, 1984

MUSIC: Swedish folk melody

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SOMETHING IN COMMON...

SOMETHING IN COMMON...

P.O. BOX 6311

MOBILE, AL 36660

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Marge Ragona
Shirley Lambert
911 Valley Ave., Apt G
Birmingham, AL 35209

SOMETHING IN COMMON...

DECEMBER 1995

CORNERSTONE METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH



Pastor's Note



It is Advent ... again. 1995 has been an exciting year for this congregation with changes, growth and moving. And now you want us to wait? To stop and even go back to the times of waiting? I assure you that "going back" is not what Advent is about! **Advent is about remembering the One who keeps us when hope runs thin, when strength is low, when the next step of faith is not yet clear.**

There are times when growth happens and there is excitement and activity and all kinds of evidence of God's presence. We call them mountain tops. **We reach the mountain heights because we have walked the journey to them through the valleys** where we sometimes couldn't see much of the horizon for all of the undergrowth and dust of life that hung there. There were the cloudy days that we just had to live through until the sun light broke back into its bright warmth. Advent is about those days of expecting the next mountain top of God's revelation.

Therefore, **we will surely experience the need for Advent again and again in our faith journeys as individuals and as God's people.** From the view we have today, we can see yet another height to pursue, another goal, another sign of direction. So we will descend the other side of the mountain to begin our journey to the next one. We descend into the forests that hide the sun or the parched deserts that leave us exposed and vulnerable to wild animals and the elements. As we walk in the dust clouds of our own making or in the heavy mud from natural sources, we need Advent with its promises of hope, love, joy and peace.

Especially on the mountain top we need Advent. We need to remember that, when God calls us to get up from the places of clear fresh air and wide vistas, it is not to send us away after tasting glory but to lead us to greater works and greater visions. We need not fear descending into the next valley. It is the way to the next wonderful mountain top!

Now this may sound scary for some of us - especially those who suffer from extreme emotional swings. But even for you Advent is a word of hope. God goes with us into the
(cont'd on P. 3)

P.O. BOX 6311, MOBILE, ALABAMA 36660 (334)476-4621

December Events

Cornerstone MCC will have a House Warming party at the church on December 9th at 7:00 PM. Some of us may just be getting out after the GAP dance the night before by this time so why not make this a weekend of parties?

The purpose of the party is to bring gifts to the church for its new home. We need chairs, tables, g/l books, office supplies, light bulbs, picnic supplies for pot lucks, a dust pan, a vacuum cleaner, tools, coffee, paint, bulletin boards, an accompanist, people in worship and worship leaders, committee and group leaders, and a host of other things on our "wish list". So bring yourself and whatever suits your fancy to give. There will be lots of food, fellowship, fun and satisfaction in return.

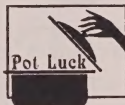
Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve fall on Sundays this year. We will have a regular service at the Christmas Eve morning worship with Gail preaching for one last time before she sojourns to B'ham for a few years. The evening Christmas Eve Service will be at our regular worship time, 7:00 PM, instead of at 11:00 PM as in the past few years. Children are welcome and the service

will be child friendly, after all, it is the celebration of the coming of the Holy Child.

After the service there will be pot luck deserts instead of our usual After Church Dinner Club. Then we can all go home for that "long winter's sleep" that is so rudely interrupted by a strange little man making a ruckus on our roofs.

Christmas Day we will have our Church Family Christmas Pot Luck at 6:00 PM. The Thanksgiving gathering of the clan was wonderful as over 20 members and friends brought too much food and we all ate far more than was healthy. We will have more chairs and tables by Christmas so our early birds won't have to move aside for the late arrivals. If everyone at the Thanksgiving meal had been there at the same time, we would have been short on chairs and that wall between the two fellowship halls is going to have to come out soon!

New Year's Eve is another Sunday and the worship services will be as regularly held. After the evening service is when the party begins again. For this night we have asked particular individuals to prepare traditional New Year's foods for supper after worship. Then we will have games, snacks, fun



Good News is Spreading!

MCC of the Gulf Coast, which has been meeting in the Community Center in Biloxi, has growing pains. Good pains to have! They have outgrown the largest meeting room in the building and are now looking at purchasing an office/warehouse in Gulfport for renovation into a church.

Does this sound familiar? Does twenty people (counting a few officers) at an Inquirers Class sound promising? What about this happening all over our district? Imagine MCC's in Dothan, Anniston, Gadsden, and a dozen other smaller Alabama towns.

At district conference in Asheville, we imagined GLAD growing from 30 to 60 congregations by the year 2000. It could happen if people are willing to become leaders, to start something new, to outgrow our fears, horizontal violence and self-hatred. It can happen if we support each other as Pensacola has supported Mobile (with a special thank-you to Holy Cross for their donation of a beautiful pulpit that almost perfectly matches our sanctuary). Mobile and Jackson help Biloxi, Birmingham helps Tuscaloosa. None of us are overflowing with excess but as we

recognize our mutual cares and needs, we strengthen one another. God is blessing our unity in witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. What a Fellowship!

Ten Commandments for Christmas

1. Thou shalt not leave Christ out of Christmas.
2. Thou shalt not value thy gifts by their costs.
3. Thou shalt give thyself with thy gifts.
4. Thou shalt not let Santa Clause take the place of Jesus Christ.
5. Thou shalt spend sensibly and responsibly.
6. Thou shalt not neglect the church.
7. Thou shalt not forget the needy.
8. Thou shalt experience Christmas as a little child.
9. Thou shalt prepare yourself spiritually for Christmas.
10. Thou shalt give to missions.

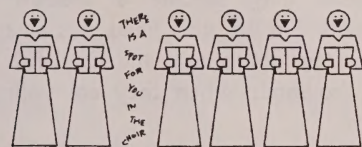
If you try to keep these ten commandments this Christmas, you will experience the true joy and love that the Christ of Christmas offers.

Editor's Note: Thanks to Bel Air Graphics for their reasonable prices and help in printing in the past. We now have a copier at the church. The new format for SIC is to accommodate it's limitations. The copier for 11 X 17 size pages would have cost us three times as much as the copier we now have. Enjoy your reading!





Fri 1	World AIDS Day Bienville Square	12:00 PM
Sun 3	Morning Worship	11:00 AM
	Evening Worship	7:00 PM
	ACDC at O'Charlies	8:45 PM
Tue 5	Jewish-Christian Dialogue Krister Stendahl at St. Paul's Luth.	7:30 PM
Wed 6	Discipleship Program Embodiment Study	7:00 PM
Thu 7	Choir Rehearsal	7:00 PM



Fri 8	GAP White Christmas Dance Mobile Botanical Gardens	8:00 PM
Sat 9	Cornerstone MCC House Warming Party	7:00 PM
Sun 10	Morning Worship Admin. Council Meeting Pot Luck Supper Evening Worship Deserts at church after worship service	11:00 AM 3:00 PM 5:30 PM 7:00 PM



Wed 13	Discipleship Program Embodiment Study	7:00 PM
Thu 14	Choir Rehearsal Homosexuality & the Bible	7:00 PM 7:00 PM
Sun 17	Morning Worship Evening Worship ACDC at Chili's	11:00 AM 7:00 PM 8:45 PM
Wed 20	Discipleship Program Embodiment Study	7:00 PM
Thu 21	Choir Rehearsal Inquirers Class	7:00 PM 7:00 PM
Sun 24	Morning Worship Gail preaching Evening Worship Special Christmas Eve Service Refreshments at church after service	11:00 AM 7:00 PM 7:00 PM
Mon 25	Christmas Pot Luck	6:00 PM
Wed 27	Discipleship Program	7:00 PM
Thu 28	Choir Rehearsal	7:00 PM
Sun 31	Morning Worship New Year's Eve Service New Year's Eve Party with traditional New Year foods, games & pot luck deserts at midnight	11:00 AM 7:00 PM 8:30 PM
JAN 1st	Emancipation Proclamation	
TBA	IMA Service of Celebration	

and fellowship until the midnight hour. After a brief communion service, we will finish off the desert course.

This means that you can piece your New Year celebrations. If you can't stand staying away from the First Night programs (I admit that they are good), you are welcome to come for worship, supper and then slip out for a while. When you get cold, or wet, or just tired of walking, come back for coffee, spiced cider, cocoa and deserts.

Next H&B and Inquirers' Classes

December classes are listed in the calendar. If you cannot make it on Thursday evenings, maybe the January combined time on a Saturday afternoon will be better.

Pastor's Note cont'd

valley. The Shepherd leads the way. Our protector stands between us and the wolves and bears and lions of the caves. In the desert the Rock will give water and the morning dew food. The people of Israel were on a "mountain top" when they stood beside the Red Sea looking back at the drowning Egyptians. Then God lead them into the desert. It was the way to Sinai where they saw God's greatness again and were in awe on another mountain. From Sinai it was back into the desert, on the other side was the way to the promised land. Finally they reached the Jordan and

could see the land promised to them. But this time they faltered in their faith. They did not believe God's word. They did not remember the vision or what God had already done for them. They did not hope in the promise made by the One who is able to fulfill all things. They despaired and refused to wait. As the story goes, they then wandered for forty years.

Thus it is for us going from the liturgical season of Pentecost, fulfillment and the crowning of Christ as Ruler of all back into Advent. It is a shock. It is a reminder of how fragile life and faith can be. Mountain tops are very small and isolated places. They are brief moments that give us vision for the next part of our journey.

Jesus is Ruler over all because he finished his earthly journey and fulfilled God's purposes for his life. But our journey is not yet done. Jesus' darkest hours were just days before his resurrection in glory. **The darker the time, the more important it is that we live by faith. The harder the journey, the more important it is that we remember the promises and wait for them.** Just as Israel waited for its savior, so we who believe wait for the final day of resurrection and victory. **Such waiting is never passive. It is faithful, active and motivated by the memory of the vision.**



GAP Dance

The Gulf Area Pride (GAP) White Christmas Dance is just around the corner. \$7.00 tickets may be purchased from any GAP officer or at the door. The fun starts at 8:00 PM at the Mobile Botanical Gardens (City Park). BYOB, set ups available and there will be lots of snack foods courtesy of your GAP officers, committee and friends.

Administrative Council Notes

The November board meeting was our first with added bills, building needs and program development. There were the routine minutes, financial report and we wish not so regular discussion of our need for an accompanist.

The exciting part of the meeting was that there were members present who will become chairs of various committees as we get our programs started. Kent will lead the Building Committee and all information about the building from the inspection and our own "wish list" have been given to him. Cheryl L. is coordinating the plans for the Coffee House. The next Yard Sale will be in March and people were suggested for this committee. With more children attending worship, we would like to develop a list of three or four people willing to rotate taking them for a children's time during the sermon. Cornerstone MCC and Gulf Area Pride (GAP) are co-sponsoring a class in ASL which will begin in January. Training for worship leaders and the quarterly Homosexuality and the Bible Classes will be

in December. Counters will be trained once Paul has learned the system himself as our new treasurer.

If you signed up for any of these programs or some of the others back in October, we have your name and someone will be contacting you in the next few weeks or months. A recovery group is also in the planning stages and being designed initially to focus on recovery from spiritual abuse (bashing, oustings, excommunications and whatever other experiences of religious abuse you may have had).

We spent a good bit of time brainstorming the need for a more explicit stewardship emphasis. A committee was formed to plan a holistic and creative approach to stewardship including a weekend spiritual retreat in May. With the increased expenses of the building, we must become more responsible!

The calendar on the agenda was so full that we didn't get to plan everything but there are definitely enough events for everyone to choose something that fits their schedule and tastes.

Finances for November

Income from offerings totaled \$1,872.60. After paying the church tithes, that will not even cover the building payment and pastor's salary. Then we still have utility bills and office expenses to go. According to our 1994 Stewardship records six people carried the burden of our expenses. These six people cannot continue to carry 65% of the new budget unless they get much better paying jobs and tithe 10% on an average income of \$40,300 each.

emptiness that we feel even though we have abundance. It is the deadness of a stream that is not allowed to flow outward into the lives of others.

Gay men and lesbians have been givers to the human community for centuries and some of us are just plain tired of being used and abused. When it comes to the church we are especially angry. We gave our art to the church - our paintings, sculptures, music and architecture. We gave our creativity to the church - our teaching, insights, spirituality and delicious cooking. We gave our time, our talents and our tithes. We gave our very hearts with caring and commitment only to be made second class citizens in the community of faith. But still there is the reality of the deadness we feel within when we don't find a way to share ourselves, to let our blessings flow on into the community.

Many of us have sought outlets in other caring professions and volunteerism. AIDS has been a great source of pain for us but it has also been a revival of compassion, caring and giving. Pride, working for social justice, creating our own communities and forming families of choice have given us ways to be human again.

Whatever failure the Church has been, however you have known it, remember that it is not perfect. Even MCC's are not there yet. Neither are our own alternative outlets. But the failure of human organizations and individuals does not relieve us of our responsibility or need to

give our part to the human community. Sometimes it is in simply trying that we find the joy and satisfaction of stewardship.

Responsible stewardship means carefully examining where you feel called to give. Not every letter that comes in the mail requesting money is yours to answer. Not every need at MASS, MCC or Pride is yours to volunteer for. Not every task is yours to do. But some are!

If it matters to you and to the larger community for a particular organization to exist and flourish in its services, then perhaps you need to consider what your part is in assuring that it does. If you are going to count on a group when you are in need, then perhaps you need to consider what your part is in assuring that it is still there when that time comes. Resources that are withheld may become a drought for yourself! On the other hand, it is amazing how a few dinner rolls and small fish can feed thousands when they are willingly shared.

This is the principle: that those who have something to share should do it so that in the future there will be someone left who can share when the circumstances are reversed. Otherwise we are all lost. And then where is My, Mine and Myself? It is empty, lost and alone.



CSS/GAP Leadership Conference

If you are involved in lesbigay organizations or group and haven't been to visit Camp Sister Spirit, if you don't know what they do, if you want to go when there will be others there from the southeast, January 19-21 is your opportunity. GAP has asked Brenda and Wanda Henson to do a weekend retreat for men and women who are leaders (anyone who is active is a leader!) in the gay and lesbian community across the southeast.

The cost will be \$20.00 per person (25.00 if you want to join us for supper on Friday night) for the Saturday morning through Sunday afternoon retreat. Our goal is to network, build skills and have fun together. There are about 30 beds for women in the bunk house but we need people who have RV's to bring them for the men. The space used for men has not yet been closed in for heating and maybe we'll need more room for all the women coming too!

Registration forms will be distributed to as many friendly local organizations and businesses as we, both CSS and GAP, can identify. If you don't see any at your favorite places, you may contact Gulf Area Pride, c/o P. O. Box 6311, Mobile, AL 36660 or Camp

Sister Spirit, P. O. Box 12, Ovet, MS 39464 for more information and a copy.

Stewardship Thoughts

Responsibility is actually what stewardship is about - responsibility for who we are, for what we do and for how we use the resources God has given us in life. We are given life and we are responsible for living it in a manner that is consistent with the good purposes God intended when we were created. We are given abilities and we are responsible for how we use them. We are given blessings and we are responsible for letting them flow on to others.

Now you may be saying "whoa!" when I say we are to let our blessings become blessings for others by sharing them. My blessings are mine. My free time is mine to use as I like. My bonus is mine to spend as I like. My hobbies are mine to enjoy. My, Mine and Myself. Have you ever noticed how things hoarded to oneself soon become old, dull, or of less value?

Part of our human nature, as God created us, is to want to be related and to share the goodness of life with God and others who are close to us. But our culture has taught us to be individualistic and self centered robbing us of the joys of community, of intimacy and of shared life. My, Mine and Myself is the root of the

So let's get real. If you are not giving regularly, why not try to move up at least one category from where you were last year. If you gave less than \$500, break into the Fortune 500. If you gave less than \$1,000, tell God you are grateful for making more than ten times that amount by moving toward a tithe. If you are living on a fixed income, the kind the government thinks people can get by on, give what you can by faith and send a letter to your representatives challenging them to live on it too. (I suspect they don't tithe now much less if on your income.)

January: Programs Beginning

Coffee House - Friday evenings from 7:00 to 11:00 PM. \$1.00 cover for the beverages. Pot luck (whatever you bring to share) on food. You are the entertainment.



Recovering from Spiritual Abuse Group - Sunday afternoons from 1:30 to 3:00 PM. Sandwich lunches from 1:00 to 1:30 for those of us staying after morning worship for a small charge. This group is open to anyone who has suffered religious bashing, excommunication, or other abuses. If you are lesbian or gay, you qualify. So will some others.

Quilting - We will be at the church working on panels for the Names Project and for our own quilt of members and friends who

have died (of whatever cause) on the first and third Mondays of each month.



Bowling - The third Saturday has not been a good time for our bowlers to congregate for the last few months. This activity will resume in January.

ASL Signing Classes - Jill Sheffield has agreed to teach an ASL beginners class for five weeks on Tuesdays in January and early February. Cornerstone MCC and Gulf Area Pride are co-sponsoring this opportunity. A fee of \$30.00 per student will be charged but other materials expenses will be kept at a minimum. 10 firm commitments are needed to make the class with a maximum of 13. If turnout justifies, a second class will be formed and students can choose which time best suits their schedules.



Upcoming Events:

Eleventh Anniversary
and Dedication of the Building, March 2-3
Yard Sale on March 16

THERE IS NO LONGER AN EXCUSE FOR SPREADING AIDS

Right now in the gay community, we're faced with some extremely difficult decisions because of AIDS -- sexual decisions affecting our lives and life-styles. We Gaymen have come up with a lot of excuses for avoiding the issue.

We all know that safer sex can reduce the risk of contracting and spreading AIDS. Some practices are more effective than others; some we have questions about.

We all need to make informed decisions, not excuses. You'll probably agree that none of the following excuses justify the spread of AIDS in our community:

"WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT?"

It's yours. Your partner's. And it's the community's. Everyone must take a concerned and active role if we're going to stop the spread of this disease.

Here's another common excuse: "If someone doesn't ask me to practice safer sex, I figure that's his decision and I respect it."

Why? Aren't you concerned? Perhaps your partner is just as uncomfortable in raising the issue as you are.

"WHOSE LIFE IS IT, ANYWAY?"

It's yours. Your partner's. And the community's. The excuse, "It's my life," is only partly true. The life of your partner and the well-being of the community are also at stake.

AIDS is not just a physical problem. There are political, social, and economic effects as well. There is already evidence that social freedoms may be restricted because of AIDS. AIDS can be used as an excuse for anti-Gay action and legislation.

Making decisions about sexual practices is difficult. Sticking to those decisions is even more difficult. But this isn't a moral issue; it's a matter of life and death.

"CHANGING MY SEX LIFE ISN'T A CURE FOR AIDS."

That's true. There is no cure or vaccine. And researchers think they are years away from developing one. Safer sexual practices are our best means right now of reducing our risk and stopping the spread of AIDS.

"CHANGE? NOBODY ELSE IS DOING IT!"

The fact is that a major research project conducted by the AIDS Foundation among San Francisco Gaymen revealed that two-thirds of the Gay community is making a serious effort to reduce their risk by practicing safer sex. Two-thirds!

Talk about it. Even though it's a difficult subject for everyone, chances are your partner is just as concerned as you are and would probably welcome a chance to discuss it.

Let's stop making excuses. Let's stop the spread of AIDS.

Reprinted from ACTS 29, Newsletter of
The Gay Men's Community Center, San Francisco, California

Rectal gonorrhea has declined 86% since the AIDS scare -- people are aware of risks and are changing their sexual habits. Safe sex works.



HOOVER'S BALL - HALLOWEEN NIGHT -- Presented by all your favorite bars and the Order of Osiris. Prizes for costumes, all bars are involved, begins 7:00 p.m. Halloween night, costumes are invited, and you are especially requested to attend this celebration of what is turning into the second most exciting activity of the year.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY - Queen Richard, Oct. 9,
from all the folks at Esquire House.



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY - Oct. 5 to Chuck at
Troopers on their 2nd Year of fun and
support of the community.

HAPPY BELATED ANNIVERSARY TO CPA -
We were not notified in time for publi-
cation last month, but CPA celebrated
their 2nd anniversary on Sept. 27th.
Great going, guys!



ANNIVERSARY

476-9142

Gay

Help-line



We met at

OPEN DAILY NOON TO 6 A.M.

3211 Springhill Ave.

Mobile, AL • 473-5985

from the fellowship "FREE TO BE"

12TH GENERAL CONFERENCE OF MCC

Sacramento, California. The conference got off to an exciting start. Rev. Elders Freda Smith and Nancy Wilson both preached Monday. I especially enjoyed hearing them. The film, "God, Gays, and the Gospel" was also shown for the first time on Monday.

The film, a documentary telling about MCC and what it means, cost about \$100,000 to make. Many unique aspects of MCC were brought out. The fact that MCC has members from every religious background and the highest proportion of women ministers were particularly interesting.

In the business meetings, a great deal was accomplished in the first few days. The Government Structures and Systems proposal was accepted with some minor amendments. Two changes will have the most immediate impact. One is the adoption of the General Council as the governing body of MCC. The General Council will be composed of the Board of Directors and the District Coordinators, thus giving total regional representation at the highest MCC level. The other change is that there will be only commissioned and chartered churches (instead of the three tier system as previously: Study group, mission, chartered church.). At the conference I was an official observer, with a voice, but without vote. In the future, all delegates will have a vote. Each delegate will represent one hundred members or a portion of 100 if the church is smaller. This means that even the smallest church will have a voting delegate.

All of the elders standing for re-election were elected.

I had an opportunity to sing in the Conference Choir, and attended several workshops, including the Sexuality and Spirituality and Spiritual Gifts workshop.

R.P., Delegate

Check it Out

MCC is the largest Gay/Lesbian organization in the world.

NOW (Nat'l Organization for Women) offers insurance for "significant others" (not just physicians, but alternative medicine as well).

Jerry Falwell and his "Moral Majority" are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars across the country to stop Gay/Lesbian rights.

A local printer refused to print our first newsletter because of its content.

A local bank refused to open a joint bank account for a well-known Gay couple.

The Unitarian-Universalist Association openly supports Gay/Lesbian rights.

Mobile Mental Health has actively trained and offers continued support for the Gay Helpline volunteers.

The Gay Helpline is in operation every night from 6 p.m. to midnight for anyone needing someone to talk to -- check it out.

The local bar owners and managers -- Chuck, Miss Betty, Jim, John, Grace and David -- make the printing and mailing of this newsletter possible.

The bar owners and managers donated money and supplies for the kick-off party to celebrate the opening of the Helpline, and that we will be raising funds for the Helpline from time to time, due to their generosity.

...from the pastor

SAUL AND ANOMIE

In the late 1800's, the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim, coined the word ANOMIE (without a name) to explain the psychological state of strangers, people at the edge of social movements with enormous change, and people who belonged to subcultures where they were unsure of what the social expectations were within a dominant group. They felt, as James Baldwin must have, like "nobody knows my name." As a matter of fact, in a true state of anomie, it's more like "I don't even know my own name." Durkheim postulated that when a society is experiencing great anomie, the suicide rate goes up. When I read of Saul, the first king of Israel in the Bible, I realized that even in Biblical times, people knew the concept of anomie, even though they didn't know the word.

Saul lived in an anomie time. He was a soldier who had been trained in the old skills of warfare before iron was invented. Suddenly, there was iron. And iron was so strong that all the weapons he had been taught to use were nearly useless. So he learned to use iron, but he was never comfortable with it. Then the people of his area learned about a new God, and all the things he was used to in the old gods were outdated. To add to his problems, Jahweh decided Saul should be king of Israel. Saul wasn't from a royal family (there weren't any royal families in Israel -- he was the first) and he didn't know how a king behaved, he'd never even had a king. But Jahweh had selected him to be king. And still worse, his son gets friendly with this David fellow -- and he knows there's something strange there -- but can that fellow play the harp! He wasn't even permitted to ask the seer what was going to happen, and feel secure, he had to trust this Jahweh God. Saul learned to adapt -- but he was never happy with the new ways, and when things really got tough, he looked to his old gods and went over to see the Witch of Endor to find out what the enemy had in store. That was where he and Jahweh God parted. Poor Saul. He was caught in a world he hardly understood! Everything was changing, nothing seemed to have a center. How he wished for the good old days, when the gods were secure, the military knew what they were doing, the country had the right kind of folk leading it, and people knew how to behave -- knew the rules. Saul was so confused, he hardly knew his own name any more. He was a real case of anomie. And eventually, he did what Durkheim postulated -- he committed suicide.

Can you see some parallels? Many people today feel that sense of anomie. The world has changed so rapidly that people are frightened. They want some sense of the past to hold on to. God, they pray, make it safe again, let me know what to expect! Many Christians are at that point. The world has changed so greatly that they are frightened. Nuclear energy, great social upheaval -- especially within the time of the baby boomers; new forms of government--like Communism and socialism -- scare them. The questioning of old beliefs and the arising of new ideas --all of these together are frightening for people who remember how simple it was when everybody knew what to expect. When the milk train stopped and the old time religion had meaning for everyone -- when everyone was American and your neighbor wasn't a Cambodian Buddhist, a Russian Jew, a Japanese Taoist and your son or daughter hadn't picked up some new religion like the Moonies. When sexuality and sex roles were simple -- men were men and women were girls, and nobody they knew was gay. People out there are scared. And they want the old time religion that had meaning and they want to go back to the time when everybody knew the rules. Well, it's that kind of time, and Jerry Falwell plays upon the fears of those people, and promises them "The Old Time Gospel Hour" and tells them who the enemy is (us), and they follow him, and he profits, and profits, and profits.

But maybe there's more to it than that. Durkheim was also talking about anomie being a condition for strangers and sojourners and for people in subcultures. Maybe there's something there for us, as well. Gay liberation has called us to come out -- it has asked us to change our ways and to trust God to help us find a way to be a new kind of gay people-- strong, and open, and fearless. And



WELCOME

SOOM AND DIGNITY TO BEGIN IN MOBILE

Efforts are being made to organize two new organizations for gay and Lesbian people in Mobile. According to John P., who is spearheading the drive, the Silver Owls of Mobile (SOOM) and a Dignity chapter are looking for persons interested in these groups.

SOOM is a social group for older people, usually over the age of 40, and for younger people who like to be with older gays and Lesbians.

Dignity is an organization for gay Catholics and their friends. The chapter will be part of the national organization that consists of over 117 chapters across the nation.

"Too often gay and Lesbian Catholics feel alienated from their church. Dignity has been successful in being a bridge for these people to rebuild a religious life. Also, Dignity has been effective in creating a dialogue with the church's hierarchy," said John P.

He noted that the SOOM organization is simply an attempt to bring people together in a social context. "Many older gays and Lesbians simply have no social place to go except the bars, where they are usually ignored by younger people. SOOM will be an attempt to provide a congenial group for dinner parties, theater and other outings.

Anyone interested in SOOM or Dignity is asked to contact John at 342-7891, or the HELPLINE at 476-9142.

FIRST NIGHTERS

People interested in going to theater: Involves joining Joe Jefferson Players (\$25.00 for 6 plays/musicals) plus other theater presentations. Call HELPLINE for further information - 476-9142.



Club Park Ave

#7 S. Joachim St.
Mobile, AL 36602
(205) 433-1236
(205) 433-9142

JIM CRISS
General Manager

...from the pastor

maybe we, too, are like the Falwell followers. It was so secure in my closet. I was so comfortable hiding. I really don't need these new, frightening ideas of openness and liberation, do I? Oh, yes, you do. You need them for your mental health, you need them for your ability to be a whole person, you need them in a world of change, so that you can change with the world and not be stuck, as Saul was, in fear. Saul clung to the old gods, and could not trust Jahweh God -- and he lost. Most of us try the same thing. We stick to our old gods, our closetedness and our lies. God sees through us -- God knows who we are, and God loves us enough to invite us to be KING. Be all you can be, be the royal person God invites you to be. The alternative for far too many of us has been Saul's solution, suicide; the death of who we really are or can be. The gay community is growing up, and learning that in taking risks there is strength and growth. Don't be a Saul -- be a David. Take the risks -- and grow!



COMING OUT

I've often heard Rev. Marge quote her friend from Providence, Ray LaRiviere, who coined a phrase about gay attitudes, "As long as I can boogie, I'm free." A lot of us started out the same way. If it hadn't been for Gay/Lesbian bars, we would have had nothing. Work, a relationship, maybe -- and then party time at the bars. But heavens, don't ask me to meet your there before the sun went down.

We remain in our closets, doing nothing, hoping and sometimes even praying that no one ever discovers who we "really are." From birth, almost, we are conditioned that to be Gay/Lesbian is a fate worse than death. So we hide and we die a thousand deaths each day. And then one day something wakes us up and we come face to face with years of playing "straight" games. The roles we adopted are unbelievable and staggering, not to mention the toll oppression has taken on our lives.

Sane or insane? The medical world finally realized our sexual preferences had nothing to do with our sanity. Yet, many of our people have difficulty making it through life. Many suffer dependency problems -- sexual, drug, alcohol -- many are emotionally crippled by "oppression sickness." They really don't remain sane in world that tries to crush them.

To many of you out there, "coming out" would be insane. For many it would be. The greatest day of my life, however, was when I became insane. Oh, I'd already come out to some very selected "straight" friends, having carefully tested the waters before ever diving. Heck, they already knew who I was anyway.

Things started changing the day I walked into the new MCC. Sweat poured down my back, fear gripped every part of my body. I made myself sit in the second pew from the front, another bold move for me. I looked behind me, and came face to face with an older "straight couple." I muttered some weird excuse (to whom I still don't know) and got up to leave. But I didn't.

I made it through the daylight. I made it through the service in God's house. I was introduced to the older couple and lived. Last week at Bruno's I happened to notice my attire and chuckled to myself. My MCC t-shirt looked quite nice! A couple of people gave me knowing smiles, but most of the shoppers paid no attention to me. Most of them, if they knew what an MCC was wouldn't have cared anyway. Most of your professional associates, your families, your straight friends probably know who you are right now. Some may not want the confrontation of being told, but many would welcome your openness and applaud your courage and honesty.

For years, a small minority ran my life. Now I'm in charge. IT FEELS GOOD!!!



Metropolitan Community Church of Mobile

P. O. Box 6311, Mobile, AL 36660

205-476-4621

Helene H. Loper, Pastor

December 29, 1994

Rev. Marge Ragona
Shirley Lambert
P. O. Box 101473
Birmingham, AL 35210

Dear Marge and Shirley,

As we have already indicated, you are invited to join us here at MCC of Mobile for our Tenth Anniversary on March 3-5, 1995. Activities for the weekend include:

Friday:	Banquet	7:30 PM	Days Inn at I-65 and Airport Blvd. Tickets: \$25.00 / person
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Saturday:	Book Signing	2:00 PM	Church, 6345 Old Shell Rd.
	Forum	3:00 PM	Church, 6345 Old Shell Rd.

(BREAK for supper on your own from 4:30 to 7:00)

Marsha Stevens Concert	7:00 PM	Days Inn at I-65 and Airport Blvd. Love Offering for Stevens
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Worship Service	8:30 PM	Days Inn at I-65 and Airport Blvd. worship offering for expenses
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Sunday:	Worship Service	10:00 PM	Days Inn at I-65 and Airport Blvd. worship offering for expenses
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Marge mentioned that some of the "old timers" are planning a get together. That is up to those of you planning your event. There is ample time to plan around our schedule and it will not be advertised as a part of our official MCC of Mobile schedule as we are aware that not all of the founding and early members have been included.

We need ticket monies for the banquet in our hands by February 28th. The final count on the number of reservations for the caterer is due then.

Sincerely,

Rev. Helene H. Loper

SOMETHING IN COMMON...

FEBRUARY 1995

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF MOBILE



Pastor's Corner

Innocuous Christianity, that is what I call it when a person's Christian faith makes no difference in their life. A virulent bug makes itself known plainly, a weak one makes us immune. But a bug that doesn't do anything is of no concern to anyone.

Innocuous Christianity is the kind of faith that people never catch or know they have. It is weak and may even make people immune to the real thing. It is ineffective for any good.

I am not much of a TV watcher and cannot stand much of the religious right's programming. But I am not surprised to hear that the recent earthquakes have aroused the interest and excitement of prognosticators of doomsday. Others say that there are still some things not "in place" to fit their understandings of what the end times will be like.

Such a doomsday boom from the suffering of the earth and its creatures arouses my suspicions. People, whose Christian message normally does not encourage faith that produces action, may take advantage of such events. People do respond to fear where there is no faith. But once the fear is gone, life goes back to its former ways.

A good test of faith in any time is to ask oneself, "If Jesus came today, right now, would I be doing what I am doing?" If your answer is "yes", then your faith is active in your life. Faith is very much alive within you. If your answer is "no", then perhaps it is time to examine what you believe and how you are living.

Scripture says that no one knows the day nor can anyone predict when it will come. There will only be signs of the times. And signs of the times are in every age because the gospel message is that "today is the day of salvation." Today is the day that faith can make a difference in your life and destiny.

But be warned. Genuine faith will be very virulent. It will work on your conscience making you ask yourself questions about the meaning and motive of your actions. It will change your priorities in life. It will change habits and hangouts, spending patterns and working patterns. It may take some time to really come down with the condition, you may not see any immediate effects. But if you've gotten the real thing, it will grow and become visible.

Now I am not talking about "do gooders" who are constantly watching what they are doing and patting themselves on the back for not being like "ne'er do wells". I'm not talking about people who have rule books or authority figures who tell them everything to do. People who have caught the real thing are not as focused on doing what is right as they are on being who God has created and called them to be in each moment and place they find themselves. Faith is inside of them, responsive to the coaching and promptings of the Spirit.

Abraham believed God and left for parts unknown. Joseph was as consistent in jail as he was in his father's house. David fled from Saul weeping yet praising God at the same time. Peter was fine out there on the stormy sea, that is, until he looked at what he was doing. Barnabas took Paul into the church when the rest of the disciples were afraid. Barnabas knew that God could infect anyone with faith. And Paul was infected! He infected so many others that soon virtually every major city of the Roman Empire had his strain of the faith bug.

Jesus said to his disciples "you are the salt of the earth" and "a little leaven, leavens the whole lump". Salt that has no flavor is innocuous, leaven that does not grow is dead. **Faith that is real is salt adding seasoning to and preserving life, leaven raising the loaf, flavorful, savory, and delightful.**

(cont'd p. 3)

10th Anniversary

MCC of Mobile will be celebrating its Tenth Anniversary March 3-5 with Rev. Elder Troy Perry, founder of UFMCC, as our special guest speaker. We have planned a weekend full of events and worship as we mark our tenth year of ministry in the Mobile area.

Rev. Perry has Mobile roots in his own journey to becoming who God created him to be. He attended Murphy High School and entered the ministry as a Pentecostal preacher here. This will be his first visit back to Mobile since he came out and founded UFMCC. He anticipates and is as excited about this weekend as we are.

(cont'd p. 2)

The theme for this Anniversary is "Coming Out, Coming Home" which is related to Troy's story and our own here in Mobile. Many gay men and lesbians have experienced the pain of alienation from family and church in our coming out and being who God created us to be. But coming out of slavery and degradation in Egypt was a painful and necessary experience for God's people before they could truly worship God with all of their being. And like them, we in the lesbian and gay community have found ourselves at another mountain - though still in the wilderness - forming a new community of worship, UFMCC, where we can live and serve God faithfully. We are coming home to the promised land. YOU are invited to join us in this journey and celebrate with us this milestone anniversary here in Mobile.

Our opening event will be a **Banquet** at the Days Inn (I-65 and Airport) on **Friday night** March 3rd. This is the only event of the weekend that requires tickets which must be purchased to attend. Tickets are \$25.00 per person. Make checks payable to MCC of Mobile and get them to us no later than February 28th - that is when we have to give the motel our final count. The Friday night Banquet begins at 7:30 PM.

When Perry first reconciled his gay and Christian identities in the early seventies, he wrote the book *The Lord is My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay*. As the story of UFMCC and our struggle to be God's people in a homophobic society unfolded, he wrote a sequel, *I'm Not Afraid Anymore*. These two books will be available for sale at the **Book Signing** on **Saturday afternoon** at 2:00 PM at the church (6345 Old Shell Road where we rent space for Sunday evening worship).

Following the Book Signing there will be an open **Forum** with Rev. Perry from 3:00 - 4:30 PM at the church. Troy is a very open, honest man who will talk plainly about issues and problems we have as gays and lesbians, as Christians who have been excluded, as people who know oppression and whatever other topics happen to arise. Come and bring your thoughts, feelings and questions.

Saturday night we will have another gifted and special person with us who has also had to come to

terms with her lesbian and Christian identities.

Marsha Stevens began her music career as songwriter and singer with the Children of the Day group when she was a teenager. She is the author and original singer of "For Those Tears I Died". Ostracized from her group when she came out and alienated from her church, Marsha came home to UFMCC. She has resumed her music career and travels all over the Fellowship (as we refer to our denomination) sharing her gifts with us. She writes a wide variety of songs from theme songs for our General Conferences to love songs for us to sing to our sweeties. She tells her story and faith in her beautiful, touching music. The Marsha Stevens Concert will begin at the Days Inn at 7:00 PM on Saturday night. A love offering will be taken up for her ministry during the concert.

After the Concert, Rev. Perry will be preaching at a **Saturday night Worship Service** at 8:30 PM in the same location and again on **Sunday Morning** at 10:00 AM. These services will be in the usual UFMCC style with lots of singing, prayer and communion in addition to Troy's dynamic preaching. Metropolitan Community Churches share at table with all who believe in God, accept Jesus as their savior and seek to live by the power of the Holy Spirit. If you are on the faith journey with God, you are welcome to share fully and be encouraged with us in these services and events as together we are "Coming Out, Coming Home".

Congregational Meeting

The Administrative Council has set the date for our regular Spring Congregational Meeting for April 23rd at 3:00 PM. It will be followed by a Pot Luck Supper at 5:00 PM.

The agenda will include: election of two council members-at-large, one for a two year term and one to fill Stevie's unexpired term for one year; election of an alternate lay delegate to serve until this fall's regular election of lay delegates; reports from committees and goals setting for the next year.

We are moving the goals setting into the congregational meeting context to make it more community property and responsibility. Setting goals is already a regular process for MCC of Mobile as we prepare our annual report to the GLAD District Committee each summer.

Calendar

February

1	Wed	Discipleship Program	7:00 PM
		Bible Study: Jeremiah, Lamentations	
		Choir	8:00 PM
2	Tues	Pray for Building	
5	Sun	Worship	7:00 PM
		Supper at Chili's	9:00 PM
8	Wed	Discipleship Program	7:00 PM
		Bible Study: Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel	
		Choir	8:00 PM
11	Sat	Order of Osiris Ball	
12	Sun	Admin. Council w/ Jay Neely	3:00 PM
		Open forum with Jay Neely	4:00 PM
		Worship	7:00 PM
		Supper at Sweet Pea's	9:00 PM
13	Mon	Administrative Council	7:30 PM
14	Tues	VALENTINE Service	7:00 PM
		Photo's following service	
15	Wed	Discipleship Program	7:00 PM
		Bible Study: Galatians	
		Choir	8:00 PM
16	Thur	PRIDE Meeting	7:00 PM
19	Sun	Worship	7:00 PM
		Supper at O'Charlies	9:00 PM
22	Wed	Discipleship Program	7:00 PM
		Bible Study: Ephesians, Colossians	
		Choir	8:00 PM
26	Sun	Joe Cain Day Spaghetti Supper	5:00 PM
		Worship	7:00 PM
		2nd Supper at Appleby's	9:00 PM
28	Tues	MARDI GRAS Day	
		10th Anniversary Banquet Ticket money is due - absolutely & no later!	

March

1	Wed	Discipleship Program	7:00 PM
		Bible Study: I, II Peter, Jude	
		Choir	8:00 PM
3-5th		10th Anniversary Weekend	
	Fri	Banquet	7:30 PM
	Sat	Book Signing	2:00 PM
		Forum	3:00 PM
		Stevens Concert	7:00 PM
		Worship	8:30 PM
	Sun	Worship	10:00 AM

(Pastor's Corner cont'd)

People who are used to the innocuous stuff do not appreciate the triumphs of a life full of virulent faith. They live in fear of the infection thinking they will lose everything they value. The day of judgement looms heavy in the air of their uncertainties. They are afraid, empty, without the real thing. They are like the people in the *Warm Fuzzy* book. Their fake fuzzies do not satisfy, cannot comfort and are not worth sharing.

But those of us who have tasted the goodness of God's grace by faith wouldn't trade our contagious condition for all the riches, status or power of the world. The reason is that we have finally found something that satisfies our deepest desires in life - a spirituality that gives us meaning, purpose, hope, love, and peace. **Let the end times come when they will, we are not afraid anymore.**

The ACDC

Now that we have your attention, let us invite you to join us for social time after church on Sunday nights. There are usually 4 to 12 of us who want to eat after all that worshipping on Sunday so we have formed what we affectionately call the ACDC - the After Church Dinner Club. At about 9:00 PM we go to one of a variety of restaurants for anything from something to drink to a full meal.

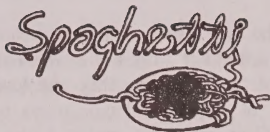
Some people have expressed an interest in joining us who have, for one reason or another, not come to church. In the past, the decision making process on the location has been a weekly routine of, "Where do you want to eat?". "I don't know where do you want to go?", "I decided last week..." Actually we usually end up laughing at each other before we finally get down to making a real decision. While we have enjoyed playing with this weekly routine, it has left many others out because they had no way of knowing where we planned to go after church.

Therefore, we will begin, with this newsletter, to become more inclusive by announcing in the calendar the

location that we will migrate to after church. Because we never know how many of us will be going, we never make reservations. But at that time of night we rarely

have a problem getting a table. If you want to join us, just come to the place listed in the calendar at about 9:00 PM and look for us - or wait a few minutes to see if we are running late in getting over from the church.





Joe Cain Day Supper

Mardi Gras brings fun and revelry to Mobile and Joe Cain Day is one of the highlights of the season. For those of you who want to enjoy the afternoon's festivities on February 26th and still get to church on Sunday evening, MCC of Mobile will host a supper designed for the occasion. For a \$3.00 donation you can come to the church at 5:00 PM for a Spaghetti Supper including garlic bread and salad. (Pasta and garlic will cover most of your indulgences of the day.) If it is cold and/or wet, warm up with coffee, cocoa or spiced cider. Then you will be ready for worship at 7:00 PM. After all, the season is in preparation for Lent.

Administrative Council Notes

At our January council meeting, the board did a number of routine things like approve minutes, reports and review the church calendar. Several items are of particular concern to us.

First, the matter of space for meetings and classes is still unresolved and we will be meeting with the Unitarians soon to discuss how available their facility will be to us in the future. Members are still going about town noticing churches, houses and other buildings for sale. The Building Fund is now \$11,863.35 which is \$8,141.27 or three times greater than at the beginning of 1994. Some of us are "very hungry" for a building of our own while others do not seem to understand or care about our needs. It will take a lot of people getting hungry enough to make something happen to change this situation. We hope YOU are getting hungry with us.

Plans for the Tenth Anniversary include some major expenses for our budget. It is very important that we sell at least 50 tickets for the Banquet to cover the minimum charges. There are plenty of other expenses for us to cover without making up for the Banquet too.

We received a letter from Rev. Reid Christensen for the GLAD District Committee regarding our annual review for 1994.

Everything seems to be in order except for a minor point of bylaw omission which we will remedy at the fall congregational meeting.

The church still needs a regular accompanist. A flier has been sent to the USA Music Department and ads placed in the newsletter. Several people were suggested by name, but they were all unavailable.

DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAM

As time has progressed and the Deacons' Program continued, it has become the basic training for members and friends in discipleship. We do not have anyone currently in training for the diaconate so the name of the series has been changed to reflect what it is.

For those of you who have not been following our calendar, for over a year now we have been going through the Bible and applying it to our everyday lives through alternating Bible study and topics on Wednesday evenings from 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM. In February through April we will continue this program with a special study series through the Lenten season climaxing the week of Easter. As always, if you are unable to come on a regular basis, each night may be taken on its own merit but the effect of coming to the whole is greater.

The programs for most of these weeks will be Bible studies and reflection on these themes:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Feb 1 | Rejected Witness: |
| | Jeremiah |
| 8 | Living Faithfully under Opposition:
Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel |
| 15 | Essentials under Fire from Within:
Galatians |
| 22 | Essentials under Fire from Without, I:
Ephesians and Colossians |
| Mar. 1 | Essentials under Fire from Without, II:
I, II Peter and Jude |
| 8 | Where the Rubber Hits the Road, I:
James |
| 15 | Where the Rubber Hits the Road,
part II: Philippians and Philemon |
| 22 | Rulers and Peoples, I:
I, II Kings and I, II Chronicles |
| 29 | Rulers and Peoples, II:
I, II Kings and I, II Chronicles |
| Apr. 5 | Topic:
The Church's Story in the Balance |
| 12 | That You May Believe:
John |

Valentines Day

Rite of Blessing of Relationships and Couples Photography Special

On Tuesday, February 14th MCE of Mobile will have a special service for the Blessing of Relationships. This Rite of Blessing is open to any one who desires for their relationship to be set apart and looked upon with God's special grace and care. It is not a Holy Union or Marriage but a service of prayer and recognition of relationships.

The service will be at 7:00 PM at the church. As with all MCE services, you may come dressed as you feel comfortable. But if you plan to take advantage of the photography special you may want to dress up a bit. Photos by Joyce is offering a package deal for 21.75 (including taxes). Joyce and Sandy will be set up for professional photographs with a red velvet backdrop for sittings after the service.

PRIDE Meetings & T-SHIRT Contest

The Mobile PRIDE Committee began meeting in November to start planning for this June's events. There are all kinds of work to do, many positions still open and more meetings scheduled when you can come and join in making PRIDE happen.

Meetings are scheduled for 7:00 PM:

February 16

March 14

April 4, 18

May 9, 23, 30.

The February meeting will be on a Thursday in the house at 6345 Old Shell Road at 7:00 (not in the usual place which is the worship building). Other meetings are currently scheduled for Tuesdays.

The international PRIDE theme for 1995 is "100 Years of Being Out" in celebration of the life of Karl Ulrich. Ulrich lived and was the first self identified gay man during the 1800's when human sexuality was just being recognized as diverse.

Here in Mobile in 1994, the PRIDE Committee began to celebrate our gifts and diversity with a local artist creating the T-shirt design for our 1994 theme. We are sponsoring a T-shirt Design Contest for our 1995 PRIDE wear. The design should be printable on one side of a T-shirt, in a maximum of four colors, and signed by the artist. Entries should reflect the theme for 1995. The deadline for entry is February 28th, that is Mardi Gras Day. The winner of the T-shirt contest will get two free shirts and the advertising of their art on 142 other people when all shirts are sold.

If I Give My Heart to You

The heart gets mixed reviews in the Bible. It can be good or evil (see Mark 7:21 or Matthew 12:34; 15:19). Valentine's Day reminds us that the heart can be fickle (How many valentines have you received since first grade?), but also steady and committed. Here are some familiar Bible verses in which the heart is mentioned. Can you supply the missing word in each?

1. "Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord _____."
2. "_____ me, O God, and know my heart."
3. "Get yourselves a new heart and a new _____!"
4. "The heart is _____ above all things."
5. "Blessed are the _____ in heart."
6. "Where your _____ is, there will your heart be also."
7. "I am gentle and _____ in heart."
8. "O foolish people, and slow of heart to _____."
9. "Let not your hearts be _____."
10. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through _____."
11. "You became _____ from the heart"
12. "Therefore we do not _____ heart."

ANSWERS to Valentine word quiz:

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. rejoice, Ps 105:3 | 7. lowly, Matt 11:29 |
| 2. Search, Ps 139:23 | 8. believe, Luke 24:25 |
| 3. spirit, Ezek 18:31 | 9. troubled, John 14:1 |
| 4. deceitful, Jer 17:9 | 10. faith, Eph 3:17 |
| 5. pure, Matt 5:8 | 11. obedient, Rom 6:17 |
| 6. treasure, Matt 6:21 | 12. lose, II Cor 4:16 |

SOMETHING IN COMMON...

SOMETHING IN COMMON...
P.O. BOX 6311
MOBILE, AL 36660

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Marge Ragona
Shirley Lambert
911 Valley Ave., Apt G
Birmingham, AL 35209

SOMETHING IN COMMON...

APRIL 1996

CORNERSTONE METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH



Pastor's Note



Those of you who have read my notes for some time know that I will say what I see. This month (March) I bumped into a major manifestation of what I believe is holding Mobile gay and lesbian people down - literally oppressing us.

Mobile is a deeply religious city. That is not bad or oppressive in itself. But some religions are oppressive. This should not be news to you. It is the reason many of you have attended the Homosexuality and the Bible class and come to MCC.

What I identified is just how perniciously anti-gay religious groups have behaved and sought out those places where we are weakest. In their minds, they consider it ministry. To us it is death emotionally, spiritually and sometimes even physically.

I am talking about spiritual programs in some of our local mental health in-patient centers which are sponsored and run by folks from certain large Southern Baptist congregations here in Mobile. Are you surprised? Did you think that mental health would be exempt from the culture of its workers? Did you think that these religious over-lords would respect our pain or reality?

In an effort to process the depth of this new information, I ask that those of you who have experienced in-patient or out-patient programs at any of the mental institutions here in Mobile please write to me about your story of what they are like. I do not want your names, unless you want to give them, only information about what you experienced. Were staff open to talking about homosexuality as a reality that is normal? Did you feel safe talking about your coming out issues or relationships with staff and in groups? If you were getting treatment for substance abuse, did that treatment include dealing with the possible underlying issues around being socially oppressed, fears related to being outed, fears of violence, spiritual abuse of your faith and family rejection due to your sexual orientation? Was the spiritual program offered at the institution good news to you or did it condemn you? Were you told who was sponsoring the programs? What denominations and religious beliefs did they represent? Who supports their presence if

(cont'd on P. 2)

P.O. BOX 6311, MOBILE, ALABAMA 36660 (334/476-4621)

Congregational Meeting and Goals Setting

Our regular spring congregational meeting is scheduled for April 28th at 3:00 PM. The agenda will include the regular election of a member-at-large to the Administrative Council, receiving mid-year reports and Goals Setting for 1996-97.

With the purchase of our own building, our possibilities have been greatly enlarged. A part of this is also a review of our progress on last year's goals. That too will prove exciting as we look at what was once only a dream but now is reality. Who would have thought last spring that we would be in this place just one year later? What dreams will we pursue for next year? If we had not dreamed, we would not have lived so as to make it happen. Goals setting is the first step, people committing themselves to work toward the fulfillment is the next. Then God can do miracles along the way. What miracles for 1996-97 are going to begin this month?

Pastor's Note cont'd

they are not paid institutional staff? Your responses and the information you share are important as we look at the ministries that we need to be doing here at Cornerstone MCC.

There have been articles in the paper recently about medical doctors realizing the power of spirituality in the process of healing. We cannot separate our bodies from our emotions and souls. Healing involves all of our being - body, mind and spirit - in the process.

Mental health treatments that ignore the influence of religious beliefs on emotional wounds are not doing holistic care. I have heard that as much as 75% to 80% of the people who seek mental health care would find immediate improvement if they could just let go of some of their religious rigidity. I am not talking about people needing to abandon their faith. I am talking about people who continue to live in a religious context and belief system where they are dependent on someone else telling them what is right or wrong. I am talking about people who subject themselves to the demand to conform to someone else's standards for living - standards that contradict the reality of their own identity and lives. This is death because we must then deny ourselves to fit what someone else wants us to be.

Trying to live by someone else's faith in this way is a sure recipe for craziness as life becomes fragmented into compartments. People find themselves living like multiple personalities depending on what context they are in at the moment. There is the terror of different worlds ever meeting and having to decide on who they will be in that moment. This results in feeling bad about themselves because much in their lives is

REQUESTS, A PARTICULAR STUDY TEXT OR TOPIC AND GROUP REFLECTION ON HOW THESE ARE RELEVANT TO OUR FAITH AND LIFE TODAY.

YOU NEED NOT WAIT TO COME WHEN A NEW STUDY IS STARTED. EACH WEEK IS ITS OWN ENTITY AND WORTHWHILE AS A STARTING PLACE FOR YOUR OWN DISCIPLESHIP AND GROWTH IN THE GRACE OF GOD'S LOVE.

ASL Classes

Another beginners level American Sign Language Class will be offered for the five Tuesdays of April. If you are interested, please call the church at 476-4621 or Tony at 824-4447. The cost is \$30.00 per person. We need at least ten people for the class to make.

Pot Lucks

The Friday Pot Luck has continued to attract people who want a place to socialize apart from the bars. It got a bit confusing when the Yard Sale filled the fellowship hall and the tables were covered with sale items, but even then a half dozen of us enjoyed a rather well balanced meal. You just never know what the evening will bring - from a variety of bean dishes to all meat, from salads to a sweet tooth's delight. And the people are just as diverse and unpredictable. Sometimes there are

over twenty of us, at others just a few. If you come and join the fun ... well, shall I say that its a pot luck made one dish better?



Backbones People

Every church has four different kinds of people:

The **wishbones**, who spend their time wishing for success instead of working for it.

The **jawbones**, who talk about success but do very little else.

The **knucklebones**, who knock everything that everyone else is doing.

The **backbones**, who get under the load and get the job done.

Thank God for these people! Pray that God will increase the number of "backbones people" in our church.

Anonymous

permitted to speak up to three minutes each against 396 which amounted to less than 15 of the 90 minutes used for the meeting. Only three or four senators bothered to be present for most of the hearing and the translesbigay community was again silenced.

Personally, this pattern of Alabama's elected officials acting as if they and Alabama law are superior to the Constitution of the United States of America disturbs me (I tend to understate). Surely the citizens of Alabama value their rights. Surely Alabamians are tired of seeing our elected leaders on TV news programs getting their hands slapped for civil rights violations when they attempt to enforce bad laws. So why do we support legislators who write those bad laws? Perhaps if law-makers were held accountable for conspiracy to deny civil rights when they vote for and pass bad legislation, they would be more attentive to fulfill their responsibility to Alabama citizens for writing good laws.

Furthermore, if Senate Bill 396 is a bad bill, what would be a just one? Believing that equal rights are just and that an equal right is equal rites. A just bill would propose the exact opposite of SB396. It would guarantee to same gender unions the same protections as given to heterosexual ones with the same legal authority vested in persons who perform such unions according to

the same standards as for heterosexual marriages.

Maybe letting state legislatures write bad laws will result in litigation that either breaks the special rights of heterosexuals in marriage or gains a decision that mandates inclusion in equal protection. I find it amusing that Republican appointed conservative courts may be forced to make this kind of decision and IRS (not to mention spend-thrift legislators) greedily looks at the marriage exemptions enjoyed by heterosexuals. But that is the hard way to go about getting equality and justice when a good law would be a lot easier, faster, cheaper and less embarrassing to everyone - unless you are a lawyer hoping to make your fame and fortune in the process!

Discipleship PROGRAM

THE WEDNESDAY NIGHT STUDY GROUP HAS GROWN CONSIDERABLY DURING THE LENTEN SERIES. IT SEEMS THAT EACH NIGHT THE TOPIC AND THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE PRESENT MATCHED TOO WELL TO BE COINCIDENCE.

THE RESURRECTION POSSIBILITIES SERIES WILL CONTINUE THROUGH HOLY WEEK. APRIL 10TH A NEW STUDY WILL BE CHOSEN BY THOSE WHO COME. THE GENERAL FORMAT FOR ALL WEDNESDAYS INCLUDES TIME FOR SHARING WHAT IS HAPPENING IN OUR LIVES, PRAYER

fake and without integrity to who they really are.

We at MCC believe that God did not create us for this kind of life! The gospel is very clear: people are saved by their faith, not the faith of others. We believe that God doesn't make junk, neither does God make some people to be objects of hate. There is a reason for who we are and, because God is good and has good intentions for our lives, we believe that being yourself is good, healthy and faithful. We are not professional mental health workers, but we are about healing spiritually, emotionally and physically according to God's grace that saves us through faith.

If some of the things I have said in this article have touched your wounded places, if some of the things I have discovered have been your places of violation, if the good news of a God who loves you is drawing you back to your faith, then you have the power to respond. You can choose, not who you are, but who you listen to and where you can grow into your best health - spiritually, emotionally and physically. Moses said it very simply, "Today I set before you life and death, choose life."

GAP Plans for June

Gulf Area Pride Committee continues to meet on the last Tuesday of each month. We are again feeling under staffed as attendance has waned to three

or four people on a regular basis. What we learned from the Leadership Conference at Camp Sister Spirit is helpful for understanding this but now we need volunteers to take responsibility for specific tasks.

All of the activities of Pride do not just happen. Someone and a few helpers must do the organizing for each event or task. The day in the park needs people who will commit to whatever you want to have there that day. Do you want a photo contest? a pet show? volleyball? entertainment? a good reputation for leaving the place clean (the park service personnel were most impressed with us last year!)? What about food, vendors and a first aid tent? Who cares about security or the media? And how are people going to find out about what is happening without some publicity? A committee of four cannot do all of these for an event the size of Pride. Your participation need not be in coming to every GAP meeting between now and June 9th, but without your contributing some leadership in making one part happen, Pride will not be all that it can be.

Call Tony ((824-4447) or Helene (476-4621) to volunteer or find out about how you can help.

EXCEL

EXCEL of the Rainbow Zebra is doing its spring retreat April 12-14th at Banner Elk, North Carolina. Helene will be the spiritual director at this event and Sheryl has signed up to attend. In the fall there will be an EXCEL weekend closer to us in Jasper, Alabama.

EXCEL is a lay lead spirituality weekend that has contributed greatly to the growth of lay leadership and participation within the church. For those of you more familiar with the Cursillo movement or the Walk to Emmaus programs, EXCEL is an adapted program for our spiritual needs and experiences.

CMCC Spiritual Retreat

The first weekend of May, May 3-5th, CMCC is having a spiritual retreat at the church. Vern is planning a variety of "workshops" done by different presenters for our reflection and growth. It will start with the regular Friday night Pot Luck social at which everyone is welcome even if they do not plan to attend the rest of the retreat. Saturday morning through afternoon will be activities and workshops followed by another meal for participants

and a vesper worship service. The regular Sunday worship services will close the weekend event.

Spiritual Recovery: What is That?

Spiritual recovery is about finding our own faith when many of us have been taught or told some things about God, ourselves and life which are hurtful and incompatible with the gospel of grace. The group is structured as a follow-up to the Homosexuality and the Bible class where people can talk about their specific issues around being who they are and their faith. It is open to anyone who is struggling with what they have heard about God and the reality of their own lives. Drop by and find a space to heal and reconcile your faith with the realities of your life.

Morning Worship Time Change

We waited over a year to find a suitable accompanist for our staff. But his family work schedule makes it very difficult for him to arrive early for the morning worship services. Therefore we are moving the morning service to 11:30 AM to allow him to arrive in time and not give the congregation a scare. Perhaps this will also help others of you who seem to have a similar problem getting to worship on time.

Holy Week Events

It has been a long time since Cornerstone MCC has had its own space for Holy Week services. The Administrative Council was so excited about it that we planned to have all three traditional events: a Seder, a Tenebrae service and an Easter Vigil.

The Seder is on Thursday April 4th at 7:00 PM. It will be based on the Jewish Passover meal with Christian and gay/lesbian perspectives in the liturgy. There will be a full meal so we are asking people who plan to come to let Helene know so she can prepare enough food.

The choir is planning the Good Friday service April 5th at 8:00 PM. Some Tenebrae services use the seven last words of Christ as the format, others focus on the events of the whole day. Sometimes the foot washing is included from the night before. The choir is doing a music service combined with readings of the passion story from Gethsemane to Jesus' death on the cross. There will be special solos, choir pieces and congregational singing as we remember what our salvation cost and share its meaning.

The Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, in which Helene is an officer, will also be holding a Seven Words service from Noon until 3:00 PM on

April 5th. The IMA version features seven of our best preachers each speaking on one of the seven last words of Jesus from the cross. The service will be held at Stewart Memorial CME church on Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.

The Easter Vigil last year was a resounding spiritual experience and Vern is planning this event for April 6th at 8:00 PM. For those of you who like high liturgy, this is one to bring your oxygen masks for. It will be an adapted high Roman Catholic style service with blessing of holy water, marking of the new baptismal candle and a renewal of baptismal vows.

BOWLING - 3RD SATURDAYS

THIRD SATURDAY BOWLING CONTINUES. SINCE MOST OF US DO NOT BOWL REGULARLY, IT IS QUITE A MIXED BAG. SPECTATORS ARE ALSO ENCOURAGED AS THEY ADD TO THE FUN AND WISE-CRACKS FOR THE EVENING. THIS IS A YOUNG AND OLD, SKILLED AND UNSKILLED, ABLE AND NOT ABLE EVENT OPEN TO ANYONE WANTING TO HANG OUT FOR A WHILE WITH A BUNCH OF FOLKS LOOKING FOR SOME FUN. LOOK FOR US AT FLORIDA BOWL ON APRIL 20TH AT AROUND 8:00 PM.

1995 Statistics on Stewardship for Cornerstone MCC

	<u>1993</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>
Total Giving to:			
General Fund	16,248.38	16,322.81	21,256.81
Building Fund	1,338.00	7,677.73	9,927.02
Designated Gifts	<u>2,221.39</u>	<u>2,957.34</u>	<u>2,186.35</u>
totals	19,807.77	26,957.88	33,370.18
 Members on Roll from January 1 thru December 31:	<u>41</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>35</u>
# giving to Building Fund	5	15	18
 Identifiable giving to General Fund by Members:	(per individual, couples averaged)		
> \$2,000 (>1,5000 in 93)	4	4	4
1,000 - 1,999	2	1	1
500 - 999	0	3	6
200 - 499	8	6	3
100 - 199	5	3	4
< \$100	8	10	8
 total # members giving	27	27	26
identifiably	66%	61%	74%
 General Fund Giving:	percent of budget:		
Top givers (> \$500/yr)	6-58.0%	8-67.9%	11-70.5%
Loose plate offering	12.5%	7.7%	12.9%
Identified non-members	7.2%	6.7%	10.5%
Other identified members	22.3%	17.4%	6.1%
 Giving and Attendance for year:			
total attendance	614	635	709
top givers attendance	6-203	8-301	11-435
% of members	33%	47%	61%

SUMMARY:

Membership turnover was lower in 1995 resulting in an increased percentage of members giving. The good news is that members are giving more, the down side is that there were not more members to do the giving. For CMCC, the stability and improved general fund support by members is a net plus. Looking at the total giving, a marked increase for each year can be seen. This, too, is good news. A strong correlation of attendance and giving is still notable.

There was a significant rise in monthly offerings in September when we moved into our new building. However, it is far below what is needed to sustain this change in demands on our budget. Budgeted expenses went from \$1,800/mo to \$3,100/mo (a rise of 72%). Giving rose immediately in September from an average of about \$1,200/mo to \$2,600 but has steadily fallen back to \$2,000/mo or less. This pattern of failure to meet budget has exhausted all cash reserves. The congregation needs its members to give regularly and liberally so we can pay the note, the pastor and other expenses.

The Building Fund has been completely depleted by the purchase of the building, repairs required by our insurer as a part of the purchase agreement, and enlargement of the Fellowship Hall.

April 1996

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM ASL CLASS	3 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM Discipleship Program Lent series	4 7:00 PM Seder Passover	5 12:00 PM IMA Seven Words Service 7:00 PM Coffee House/Pot Luck 8:00 PM Good Friday Service Good Friday	6 8:00 PM Easter Vigil
7 11:00 AM Worship 1:30 PM Spiritual Recovery Group 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM Choir 7:00 PM Worship 8:45 PM ACDC at Ruby Tues. (west) Daylight Savings-set ahead 1 hour Easter	8 7:00 PM Memorial Service & Pot Luck for John Pettibone	9 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM ASL CLASS	10 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM Discipleship Program planning for next series	11	12 7:00 PM Coffee House/Pot Luck	13
14 11:00 AM Worship 1:30 PM Spiritual Recovery Group 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM Choir 7:00 PM Worship 8:45 PM ACDC at O'Charley's	15	16 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM ASL CLASS	17 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM Discipleship Program	18	19 7:00 PM Coffee House/Pot Luck	20 8:00 PM 3rd Saturday Bowling at Florida Bowl
21 11:00 AM Worship 1:30 PM Spiritual Recovery Group 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM Choir 5:30 PM Pot Luck 7:00 PM Worship 8:45 PM ACDC deserts after church	22	23 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM ASL CLASS	24 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM Discipleship Program	25 7:00 PM Homosexu- ality & the Bible Class	26 7:00 PM Coffee House/Pot Luck	27
28 11:00 AM Worship 1:30 PM Spiritual Recovery Group 3:00 PM Congrega- tional Meeting & Goals Setting 5:30 PM Pot Luck 7:00 PM Worship 8:45 PM ACDC deserts after church	29	30 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM ASL CLASS	Upcoming Events: May 3-5 Spiritual Retreat 17-18 GLAD District Conference in Nashville, TN June 9 Gulf Area Pride Family Fair at the Park			



Mele Kalikimaka

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